Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects

UPDATE

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In This Issue...

Collecting Treasures from the Past:
A Legacy for the Future

Ama Badu Boakyewa

In the five years Dr. Sample Pittman has been collecting African American Heritage, he's traveled extensively throughout Richmond, Va., parts of South Carolina, and New England. The fruits of his odyssey, purchased from auctions, private sales, flea markets and street vendors, include an impressive array of rare books, 18th century coins with African American images,carvings, stamps and other treasures. These objects, commemorating African contributions to the growth of America, hold a strong educational appeal as well; a factor Dr. Pittman explores in the following interview.

ABB: How did you happen to embark on collecting African American Heritage?

Dr. Pittman: I suppose you want me to begin at the start? Well, as you know, I am a professor at City University and my discipline is sociology. Having come from Texas to New York via Chicago, I have been deeply involved in the research of historical documents about slavery and how this country got started, the Declaration of Independence, the constitution of the U.S., the whole political scene.

What fascinated me most was the omission of African American contributions in history books. A great omission. It was then I decided to study for a doctorate in sociology because I needed to know research methods and techniques.

In 1960, I was invited to come to New York. I was working for the National Conference for Christians and Jews in Chicago as a summer project and also as an assistant director of the Mayor's Commission on Migration. Chicago had thousands of poor people coming up from the south then, and we invited great educators to discuss urban problems, among whom was Dr. Dan Dodson, a professor at NYU. *(cont. on page 8)*

....HISTORY, DESPITE ITS WRENCHING PAIN, CANNOT BE UNLIVED, BUT IF FACED WITH COURAGE, NEED NOT BE LIVED AGAIN... Dr. Maya Angelou, "On the Pulse of Morning" 1993

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No Laughing Matter...

Dear Update Editors,

I recently saw a news program in Washington, DC one morning announcing that the Post Office was issuing a series of comic strip commemorative stamps. As someone who collected signatures for the African Burial Ground commemorative stamp which was rejected by the Post Office in February 1995, I am not at all amused by this turn of events! It's a shame that the hard work of our African ancestors goes unrecognized while comic strip characters get commemorated! I think I speak for everyone I collected signatures from when I say WE are not amused!

A.J. Bennett
Washington, DC

...On Tobacco

Dear Editor:

The article entitled "Tobacco Pipes Part I" is prefaced as one dealing with the discovery and analysis of artifacts at the Five Points site. This installment deals with the clay tobacco pipes found, and we are informed that "many Africans lived at the Points along with European Americans..." and that "We don't yet know exactly whose belongings were deposited in the abandoned backyard features..." The author then treats us to the "origin of tobacco," telling us that tobacco is native to the Americas, but only briefly and superficially speaks of Caribbean and Cuban natives, and Aztec depictions observed by early European explorers using tobacco. The article then mainly goes into European attitudes about tobacco and smoking without giving pertinent historical data on the origin of the tobacco pipe smoking tradition. Scantly mentioned was the ritual and sacred use of the stone pipe and tobacco by the Native North American Indians who inhabited this continent and the New York region long before and during the onslaught of invasive Europeans and enslaved Africans.

Although the numerous nations inhabiting North America were distinctive, much of the ancient legends and lore are strikingly similar in regard to the pipe. The Lakota (Sioux) legend says that the pipe was a gift from a beautiful, enigmatic wakan (holy) woman. Presenting the pipe to the chief she stated, "Behold this and always love it. It is very sacred, and you must treat it as such." The tobacco and kinnikinnik (herbal) mix smoked in the pipe was considered as sacred essence from the Earth Mother...thereby becoming the vehicle for summoning the spirits. When modern day Chippewa Medicine Man Sun Bear speaks of prayer and "making pipe," it is clear that they are synonymous.

The article hints at the notion that the European invaders observed, then copied the idea of smoking from Indians, but Sun Bear points out that the white man has taken the Indian's sacred practice of smoking and made it a social/casual habit.

D.A. Wright,
Bklyn., N.Y.

(*Paul Reckner, the author responds*)

Dear D.A. Wright:

...Your points are well taken. It was not my intention to slight or treat lightly the peoples who first adopted the use of tobacco. The crux of your criticism strikes me as a question of "biased" editing of history. In responding to this, I would like to offer a context for understanding the reasoning behind my choices.

I know that this is going to sound like a pat answer, but in order to conform to Update's space constraints it was necessary to remove almost half of the text of the original article. Yes, I chose to remove many of the pithy and significant cultural and historical details that you mention in your letter, but not because they lacked value. For that very reason, I am pleased that you chose to call me on the issue. The process of paring-down was difficult and it left many stones unturned in the final version, but I ask you to consider the scope and intention of the article. I approached Part I as an opportunity to familiarize the readers with the broader history of tobacco, laying the foundation for the issues which I discuss in Part II. Documentary evidence tells us that the Five Points neighborhood was inhabited by a largely, but by no means exclusively, Irish and German population in the 1850s. The traditional tobacco culture of these people was directly related to their European roots. We are not, however, overlooking the fact that people of other cultures were also present...

I've tried to address your key concerns, and now that Part II of "Tobacco Pipes..." is history, I hope the reasons for my choice of emphasis are clearer.

OPE! welcomes your letters but because of limited space, may need to edit for length and clarity.

NOTES FROM THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY LABORATORY

Pathologies Affecting Children in the African Burial Ground Population

Mark E. Mack, Laboratory Director, and M. Cassandra Hill, Osteologist

One of the most important aspects of the bioanthropological research efforts at Howard University is ascertaining the physical quality of life for those interred at the African Burial Ground. One of the clearest indicators of a population's overall health status is the health of its children. Although enslaved children were assigned to tasks of manual labor, they remained dependent on the support of adults. Additionally, they were more susceptible to the negative effects of diseases faced by a population because of an immature immuno-response system, coupled with the effects of undernutrition and poor socioeconomic status.

Before discussing specific pathologies observed in the skeletal remains of the African Burial Ground population, mention must be made of the fact that out of approximately 400 skeletal remains excavated from the site, one half of the total population are infants at or under the age of two. This points to an environment that was hostile to the normal growing and nurturing process of the most vulnerable members of any society. This pattern of high infant mortality has been observed in many stressed archaeological populations around the world. What makes this rate important to our research is that it counters the prevailing historical opinion of slavery in the Northern colonies as a much more benign institution than that of Southern slavery.

In terms of infant mortality, it is too early to ascertain epidemic demographic results, but preliminary observations show 40% of the infants are neonates (birth to six months). These neonates failed to thrive because of poor maternal health and/or a poor environment unable to sustain survival. Either one or both factors compromised the health status of the youngest members of this oppressed group. This "failure to thrive" is not the result of genetic predisposition, but is the end result of physical and psychological stresses due to forced enslavement and labor in the colonial city of New York. One must remember that when food is scarce, or a population is physically enslaved, or when a population is faced with epidemic diseases such as cholera or smallpox, it is the children that suffer most. Specific pathologies affecting children of the African Burial Ground population are discussed from this perspective below.

Children's teeth often provide the only testimony to the life conditions that children faced. This characterization is especially apt when one examines the generally poor level of skeletal preservation indicative of the African Burial Ground. Causative factors include the natural deterioration process, exposure to groundwater seepage, pressure damage from 16 to thirty feet of landfill, building construction disturbances throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and excavation and curation damage in New York. As a result of these destructive forces, the teeth, which are the hardest structures in the skeleton, are often the only remains found, and therefore are very important for our research.

The teeth provide an indelible record of a child's health status. Enamel hypoplasia and enamel hypocalcification are two defects that we study. Enamel hypoplasia, an inhibition in matrix formation of the teeth, appears as a ring or pit of poorly formed enamel. Enamel hypocalcification indicates a disruption during tooth mineralization that appears as a white to brown discoloration of the enamel. Although these defects have a variety of causes, many are due to poor nutrition or otherwise compromised health.

Many infants and children have these defects, from newborns to adolescents. Our available frequency data show that 50% of the children in the African Burial Ground experienced stressful health episodes as indicated by enamel defects. Burial 7, a four year old, has hypoplasias on the canines that have been described as being caused by poor maternal health, milk avoidance and/or reduced breastfeeding, all of which negatively affect the normal development of the child. Burial 39, a five year old, has enamel defects that occurred at or around birth, while Burial 43, a four year old, has severe teardrop-shaped pits which represent a prolonged stressful episode.

Along with enamel defects, 35% of children have cavities in the deciduous and/or permanent teeth. Certainly a major causative factor was the poor diet available to

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enslaved Africans. Instead of benefiting from a varied, nutritious diet, enslaved Africans were relegated to a diet mainly comprised of nutritiously poor foods. The average diet during the colonial period was high in carbohydrates such as corn and sugar. The sugar consumed was either refined or in the form of molasses, and often led to cavities. The high rates of cavities and associated abscesses that went untreated provide evidence of the foods commonly eaten, as well as the relative inaccessibility of dental care for the most oppressed segments of colonial New York.

Studies of the childhood rate of growth for the rest of the skeleton compared to the growth rate for teeth point out the effects of enslavement on childhood health. Most of the younger children show skeletal growth retardation relative to dental development which is under stronger genetic control to reach optimal growth even under stressful conditions. Many of these children show at least one year of lag time between skeletal and dental ages. Some show as much as two to two and one half years difference between skeletal and dental ages. A four year old (burial 27) and a five year old (burial 43) are two of the many children that show these growth discrepancies.

A four year old provides further evidence of the poor quality of life faced by children. This child exhibits rickets, a skeletal deformity that is the result of calcium deficiency. Developing bones need calcium to grow properly; without it the bones don't grow to their optimal lengths, nor are they strong enough to properly support the body. As a result the bones, especially those of the arms and legs, take on a bowed appearance. This unfortunate child had bowed legs, but the arms were of a normal size and shape. This tells us that the child experienced rickets after she began walking; both arms and legs would be bowed if calcium deficiency occurred as the baby was learning to crawl.

Prior to the development of broad-spectrum antibiotics, generalized infections were one of the most common causes of illness and death in all populations. Several factors contributed to the spread of infectious disease, including the accumulation of garbage, improper waste disposal, poor sanitary conditions and polluted water sources. Control of and access to clean resources play a tremendous role in alleviating these conditions.

The fact that so many infants and children of the African Burial Ground exhibit no skeletal pathologies is direct evidence of the impact of these diseases on the young. When an epidemic disease such as smallpox or cholera sweeps through a stressed population, adults previously exposed to the disease survive; they achieved a built-up immunity to the disease. Children, on the other hand, have no prior exposure to the disease and therefore are susceptible to its effects. The disease strikes and kills those whose health status is most vulnerable; this happens so quickly that skeletal tissues don't have the time to react to the disease.

Craniosynostosis, or premature closure of the bones of the skull, has been found in at least eleven children. When these areas close prematurely, brain development is compromised and other developmental abnormalities such as cleft palate occur. This is an abnormally high rate of pathology; such conditions naturally occur in about one out of every 5,000 children today. We believe we are seeing a pathology that is caused by extreme malnutrition of the mother during the development of the fetus, and even postnatally, when the baby depends on the mother for nourishment. One five year old exhibits premature craniosynostosis, a cleft palate, rickets and anemia—all problems that can be traced to the poor quality of life our ancestors faced in bondage.

Finally, anemia is one of several metabolic disorders caused by nutritional deficiencies. Anemia is a special case, however, because there are two different categories: those caused by nutritional deficiency and those which have a genetic origin. West and Central African populations exhibit both. The decision of which cause—nutritional or genetic—results in skeletal lesions is, therefore, a problem for this population. Most of the children appear to have nutritionally-based anemia (along with retarded long bone growth). However, there is one young adult which may have genetically-based anemia, also called sickle-cell anemia. Much more research must be completed before a clearer demographic profile of anemia in this population can be provided.

In conclusion, the dental and skeletal indicators reveal information that is not written in the history books concerning our ancestors; namely, the effects that forced enslavement, unpredictable conditions and poor socioeconomic status had on the youngest members of this population, as evidenced by pathological observations. By no means were enslaved African children shielded from these dreadful conditions. Quite simply, they were most severely affected because they did not survive into adulthood. The skeletal remains of these unfortunate children are a lasting testament to our past.

SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Compiled by Dorinda Welle

For Children

"Building the Brooklyn Bridge." Become a junior engineer! Build a model of the Brooklyn Bridge, using boxes and twine. Learn the history of the building of the bridge and how the bridge suspends itself over the East River. Sat., June 10, 1:30-3:30pm. Free with museum admission. **The N.Y. Transit Museum. Corner of Boerum Place & Schemerhorn St, Bklyn. (718)330-3060.**

"The East Indian Art of Mehendi." Sat. and Sun., June 17-18, 2-3pm. Dilshad Virani demonstrates the custom of hand decorating (mehendi). Children will transform their own designs into wearable art using non-toxic paints. FWMA. **South St. Seaport Museum Children's Center. 165 John Street, NYC. (212)748-8600.**

"Wonderful Me" Bus-side Murals. Work alongside other young artists on a huge painting where you are the subject. Plaster a painting of yourself on the side of a New York City bus and make your artistic statement! Sat., June 17, 1:30-3:30pm. **FWMA. Corner of Boerum Place & Schemerhorn St., Bklyn. N.Y. Transit Museum. (718)330-3060.**

"The African Art of Body Painting." Sat. and Sun., June 24-25, 2-3pm. Lubangi Muniania of the Museum for African Art will discuss the unique legends and customs behind African body painting. Children will create their own designs using non-toxic paints. **FWMA. South St. Seaport Museum Children's Center. 165 John St., NYC. (212)748-8600.**

"Tunnel Visions" Workshop. African-American Granville T. Woods invented "the third rail" of the subways. Learn how workers dug huge holes under the city. Help build a model of the subway tunnels, using cardboard, crayons and masking tape. Sat., August 5, 1:30-3:30pm. **FWMA. N.Y. Transit Museum. Corner of Boerum Place & Schemerhorn St., Bklyn. (718)330-3060.**

Exhibits and Talks

"A Graphic Odyssey: Romare Bearden as Printmaker." Through July 9. More than 100 lithographs, silk screens, etchings and seriographs. **Brooklyn Museum. 200 Eastern Parkway, Bklyn. (718)638-5000.**

Photo Credits: Dorinda Welle

"What Price Freedom." Through January 6, 1996. From Thomas Jefferson's manuscript of the Declaration of Independence to Nelson Mandela's statement written in prison, learn the stories of people throughout history who, at awful risk, dared to put forth their ideas. A video installation features interviews with contemporary writers, artists and public figures. **Center for the Humanities, Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Fifth Avenue & 42nd Street, NYC. (212)661-7220.**

"Arturo Alfonso Schomburg: Race Man." Through January 14, 1996. Objects from the 10,000-item private library of Arturo Schomburg illustrate how Schomburg documented and preserved the histories and heritages of peoples of African descent Also featured "The Man and His Times." The life of Arturo Schomburg, from his birth in Puerto Rico in 1874 to his death in New York in 1938. Learn about the forces that influenced his visionary work in helping to establish the Schomburg Center 70 years ago. **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. 515 Malcolm X Blvd., NYC. (212)491-2200.**

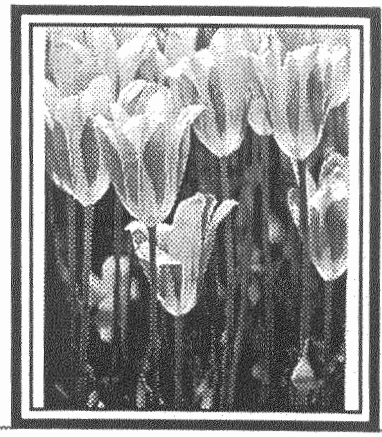
"Making Faces: The American Portrait." Through August 27, (temporarily closed June 12-20). Portraiture is a means of establishing identity and identification. This wide-ranging view of how Americans view themselves covers 200 years of portraiture. Exhibit includes works by artist Faith Ringgold. **The Hudson River Museum of Westchester. 511 Warburton Ave., Yonkers, NY. (914)963-4550.**

"Animals in African Art." Creatures are associated with healing, hunting, spirit possession and human qualities. Exhibit includes antelopes, bats, buffaloes, chameleons and various cats. **Museum for African Art. 593 B'way, NYC. (212)966-1313.**

"Treasury of the Past." Traces more than 200 years of American history with objects from the society's collection, many being publicly displayed for the first time. **N.Y. Historical Society. 170 Central Park West at 77th St., NYC. (212)873-3400.**

Book Signings and Readings

Spring/Summer schedule for **Nkiru Books, 76 St. Marks Ave., Bklyn. NY (718)783-6306:** Renowned science fiction and fantasy writer **Samuel R. Delany** discusses his semi-autobiographical novel Atlantis: Three Tales. The story of a young man's move to New York in the 1920s, his private school education, and experiences as a writer in the 1960s. **June 6, 6 -8pm.**



Accomplished journalist **Bonnie Allen** reads from her book of political satire, We Are Overcome: Thoughts on Being Black in America. **June 15, 6-8pm.**

Meet **Iyanla Vanzant**, author of Acts of Faith and Tapping the Power Within. She will read from her new book In the Value of the Valley. **June 22, 6-8pm.**

Editor and writer **Catherine McKinley** discusses Afrekete, a newly-released anthology of African American lesbian women writers. **June 23, 6-8pm.**

Trips and Tours

"The Festivals Project" offers a trip to Ghana, West Africa. **Aug. 11 -Sept. 5,** $2,395 per person. Call **Okomfo Yaa Nson Opare** for information. **(718) 206-1259.**

"Ghana 1995." Journey to the Sacred Shrines of the ancestors. **Aug. 4-26.** $2295 for double occupancy. Study with master dancers, drummers and herbalists, and sit with the elders. **Aims of Modzawe. (718)528-6279 or (718) 527-7202.**

Joyce Gold History Tours of New York: "The Colonial Settlers of Wall Street." Walk the 350 year old streets in the heart of the Financial District. Sunday, July 2, 12noon. **Call (212) 242-5762** for additional tour descriptions/ /rates.

Radical Walking Tours of New York. Central Park Walking Tour, July 16, 1-4pm. Robert Moses, Joseph Papp, Hoovervilles, Seneca Village (the Black Settlement in pre-Central Park), The Women's Trade Union League, and more. Call for additional tour packages/rates **(718)492-0069.**

Reclaim the Memories: Black History Tours of Old N.Y.: African Burial Ground and Historic Commons Tour. Visit the 18th century national historic landmark African Burial Ground and its surrounding history: the former site of Freedom's Journal (America's first African American newspaper) A.M.E. Zion Church (N.Y.'s first Black church), Little Africa and more! **Call (914) 966-1246 for additional tour information/rates.**

Queens Historical Society Walking Tours. For schedule, descriptions and tour reservations, call the Tour Hotline at **(718)939-0647,** Mondays through Saturdays 9:30am-5pm (see below).

Special Events

Rites of Passage for Women. For information and registration call **Ama B. Boakyewa (718) 693-9371.**

Educators' Symposium, sponsored by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation, June 10th. (See page 15 for details).

Quilt Making Classes. The Queens Country Farm Museum. For the ongoing schedule for beginning and advanced levels, **call (718) 347-FARM.**

The 24th Annual African Street Festival will be held **June 30th thru July 4th.** Come out and enjoy a celebration of culture. **Volunteers needed! (718) 638-6700.**

Out Of Town

"Prison Sentences: The Prison as Site, The Prison as Subject." Fifteen visual artists use video and light technologies, horticulture and fabric to create site-specific works addressing the issues of incarceration. **Eastern State Penitentiary. Philadelphia, PA. (215)236-7236.**

"Black Mosaic: The Changing Face of Black Life in Washington, DC." Through August 7. Multimedia exhibit explores cultural diversity in the Black Community. **Anacostia Museum, Washington, DC. (202)357-1500.**

"Jacob Lawrence: The Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman Series of Narrative Paintings, 1938-1940." An exhibit of 63 works by the artist. **Hampton University Museum. Hampton, VA. (804)727-5308.**

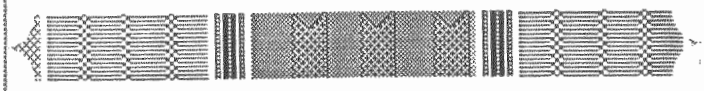
"We Also Served: African-Americans in the US Military." Through June 18. An exhibit documenting the lives of blacks who served in the military. **Wadsworth Antheneum. Hartford, CT. (203)278-2670.**

"Art and Text." Through July 16. Works by 15 Connecticut artists, including Nelson Ford's "The Awakening," a mural depicting human origins. **Stamford Museum and Nature Center, Stamford, CT. (203) 322-1646.**

"Creative Survival: The Providence Black Community in the 19th Century." Through September 23. Exhibit on African Americans in Providence focuses on the family, labor and enterprise, the church and political activity from the American Revolution to the Civil War. **Rhode Island Black Heritage Society. Providence, RI. (401)751-3490.**

The Queens Historical Society invites all New Yorkers to attend a ribbon cutting ceremony in June. The occasion marks the completed restoration of the Kingsland Homestead, QHS headquarters and, at 209 years old, is the second oldest home in Flushing. Upcoming events include the 20th annual Auction and Collectibles sale, a celebration commemorating the 350th anniversary of Flushing, and in the art gallery, a unique railroad exhibit.
Call (718) 939-0647
for details regarding these events, and a range of other services.

COMMUNITY VOICES



Compiled by Donna Harden Cole

From 1990 to 1993, the political struggle over New York's African Burial Ground resulted in many decisions concerning the human remains recovered from the cemetery. Of particular importance was the view, expressed by many concerned citizens, that the human remains should be reburied at the site following Howard University's scientific research. With the issue of reinterment only a few years away, we posed this question to several individuals: ***What impact will reburial of the remains have on individuals and institutions within New York's African American community?***

Ms. Verna Francis
Former Co-Chair of the Reinterment Sub-Committee, Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground

The impact on the community relative to the reinterment of our African ancestors will depend upon who is involved.

In my opinion, the planning and implementation of the reinterment ceremony should be carried out by African people who fully understand the significance of this event and its implications for our future. The cultural, educational, social, political and economic ramifications of our actions should be far reaching and long term.

The original members of the Reinterment Sub-Committee who met with the Chairperson Reverend William Howard, discussed elaborate and comprehensive plans for reinterment. These plans were not only national but international in scope reaching to our African Motherland. The major religions of our ancestors were represented to reflect their spirituality.

It's well known that the Reinterment Sub-Committee which I co-chaired at the request of Reverend Howard, was an extremely active committee. We brought about the Candlelight Ceremony in November 1994 as a preliminary to the final reinterment ceremony. At the abrupt disbanding of the Federal Steering Committee, I questioned plans for reinterment when the remains are returned to New York City from Howard University. There was no specific response from the Federal representatives. Our committee was left in limbo.

It will be a gross insult to the African community if the final reinterment ceremony becomes a production executed by others in a hurried, haphazard and uncaring manner.

The impact upon our committee will result in bitter and lasting hostility toward those responsible. I believe that the spirits of our ancestors will in some way reveal their anger; "THEY WILL NOT REST IN PEACE." Let us hope that clear heads will approach the African community in a timely manner to prepare for the appropriate reinterment of our ancestors.

M.A. McKenzie
Long-standing Activist for the African Burial Ground

If the spiritual integrity of the remains have not been upheld, the impact can and will be constructive or destructive. The individual/collective level of awareness and activity will be assessed. Everyone is accountable. For every action, there is a reaction and outcome. The creator will be heard. All those self-servers need not apply. Peace.

Richard Dickenson
Staten Island Boro Historian

One of the things that strikes me about the African Burial Ground is that although there are signs, there is nothing there to signify the proper aspect of a burial ground.

Having a ceremony, graves and some kind of grave markers there would make it a place with visible symbols. In terms of individuals, it would have great meaning to have something that's a visible, traditional burial place. It doesn't have to be in the European tradition, it could be African although much more instruction on African burial traditions would have to be elaborated on; the vast majority need to be educated on the subject.

It's hard to say what its impact on institutions would be, they move more slowly. But individuals and vehicles such as newsletters can exert influence on the institutions.

Jackie Carty
Concerned Citizen

I believe that they should reinter the remains in New York. The reinterment should be from a multi-cultural perspective in the same way that the Ellis Island celebration was, although African Americans were excluded from the Ellis Island celebration. This [reinterment] would be a unique opportunity for inclusion and not just a celebration from the

(cont. on page 18)

Collecting Treasures
(cont. from page 1)

After three years of visiting with us and participating on panels, he invited me to study with him at New York University. That's how I came to New York. That was really what I wanted to do and of course that was in the early 60s.

The time was right because the 60s really opened up a view of racism in America, and I was in the middle of that and also in the middle of my studies at NYU.

I discovered so much that was distorted or just plainly omitted but I left it alone for 15 years. I was conscious of it, but I had no money for research. In the last five years I really began to take interest in doing something about the omissions of African Americans in our history. I know now that most of U.S. history as written, is written from a historical event point of view. I've decided to walk in the footsteps of these historians and rewrite U.S. history from a historical explanation point of view. Having decided that, I knew I needed to collect materials.

ABB: So that's how you got into collecting African American Heritage?

Dr. Pittman: Yes, because of the omissions of the contributions by African Americans in our history. This is the problem. Historians would simply replace African heroes and make undeserving white males the heroes...because of these techniques sons and daughters of African descent have for centuries been kept out of print in American historical events. We have become an invisible race historically, we're not in the history books. I feel certain that it was deep personal experience and sober observation that led Ralph Ellison to say 'I am an invisible man.' This invisibility has even reached into the reference books of numismatic sources. If you deal with numismatics as I do, the collecting of coins, this is the most sacred and the most accurate of all reference books because you can't fake the date on currency. You can't fake the signature on it, so it's very sacred. I can show you coins with Black images impressed on them.

Photo Credit: Ama Badu Boakyewa

"We want anything that we have touched, either as enslaved or as free people...Anything that we have touched... it could be an old picture, a carving, it could be a stick or a cane..."

ABB: You showed me four.

Dr. Pittman: Four, but there are five, I don't have the fifth one because there is only two of this type known..but then you read in books that only one U.S. coin is attributed to African Americans. This was the Booker T. Washington half dollar authorized by Congress in 1946, which was issued to perpetuate the teachings and ideals of this famous Black man. Now this is the lie in print: "This was the first U.S. coin to carry the likeness of a Black man or woman." It is not the first! There were three other U.S. coins with Black images before the Washington coin! So that's what I am searching for. I'm not just collecting, I'm searching our history for truth like Sherlock Holmes would do.

ABB: How do you find out where things are? Do you go to shows, are they advertised?

Dr. Pittman: There are different publications that are mailed to me that deal with antique sales or shows like Christie's or Sotheby's. I spent $875 for a penny once. I have more than 15 pieces of U.S. currency that African Americans have signed since 1881, and a book value of more than $5,000 worth of coins with Black images .

ABB: So anybody could do this if they have a little money.

Dr. Pittman: If you have the money and the time. A lot of African Americans are doing it. I might just add I have a Ph.D. from NYU, and this may sound screwball, but I am a certified African American graduate, and it cost me thousands of dollars to earn that degree. But I had to pay three times as much money to unlearn what universities taught me, that's why I have all these books here. NYU's education has been valueless in learning about African Americans. If I had a white skin NYU's education would be perfect...this [collecting] is African American education and it cost money to do this. I collect solely for literary purposes. I'm not a dealer collector, what I've collected has been for education to be written about and shown to African American groups.

ABB: It's the basis for the research in other words...

Dr. Pittman: No, it's the basis for jettisoning my NYU education. I have a European education. I'm now getting a doctorate in African American literature, African American history and I'm writing about it. I need that education more than the public does because I'm sensitive to the point where I'm uncomfortable about not being fully accepted like white Americans and why.

ABB: As far as our own history?

Dr. Pittman: Right. I've been taught that we're just stupid and don't read. That we have no staying power and can't accomplish anything. I make $70,000 a year as a professor at a university, I have a Ph.D. but I still can't live where I want to live in this country because of racial prejudice.

ABB: What do you look for in identifying African American Heritage?

Dr. Pittman: Ah yes, that's a great question! You have to do your reading to know. We want anything that we have touched, either as enslaved or as free people. Anything that we have touched,

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it could be an old picture, a carving, it could be a stick or cane. My great, grandfather who was not enslaved, was among the first generation of free men in the family and he used to call African American artifacts "collectibles."

ABB: And would you say that exaggerated images of African Americans would be something you would want to collect?

Dr. Pittman: Absolutely because it tells us how white society thought about us. If you have an exaggerated image of a Black person that was put out for the fun and enjoyment of white people, it speaks to their attitudes at that time. We had to have extraordinarily large lips. Our English had to be extraordinarily inadequate... "I'se here honey!" And white people would laugh about our language. We were not trained to use proper English.

ABB: And why do others collect?

Dr. Pittman: Others collect for the purpose of identifying the artifacts and looking for the culture of African Americans historically. They want to be a part of that identity, God bless them. I have many friends who are African American Heritage collectors.

ABB: Would you say that it's a growing trend?

Dr. Pittman: Yes, it is a growing trend. If white society only knew the intensity, the hunger and the pride of African Americans all over this country to learn about what went on in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, they would show a little more respect to us. Some African Americans go back to the beginning, to their roots in Africa.

ABB: Do collectors have shows all over the country?

Dr. Pittman: Yes, and often we go to each other's homes. We know who we are. I just got a call from a guy in Virginia last week. He said "Sam, come up and have breakfast and I'll show you what I just picked up." And he's not selling, he just picked up a rare object. Now both of us are professional people and we can go on weekends, visit and discuss history. This [collecting] bug is replacing Sunday school and the church for a few of us. Our religion now is visiting each other's homes and seeing what's been collected historically.

ABB: But where do you go to collect these things...do they just turn up in yard sales or do you know where to go?

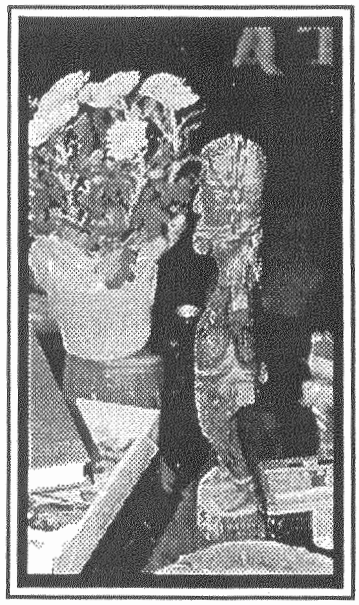


Photo Credits: A.B. Boakyewa

Dr. Pittman: I read antique ads every week. I am on the mailing list of 50 or more antique and numismatic publications.

ABB: Will the paper state whether these are things of African heritage?

Dr. Pittman: No. See I've marked some things that I'm going to order like this book: The Impact of Rum on the Early Settlement and Colonization of America, or The Slave Trade: Rum, Romance and Rebellion. Well, I know that rum in New England was the market that helped carry slavery so I'd order that book. Here's another, Eye - witness Accounts of Slavery in the Danish West Indies.

ABB: Are there other notable collections that you know of?

Dr. Pittman: Eugene Red in Maryland has an outstanding collection. He has authentic old horns that were used to call enslaved Africans out early in the morning. There's a woman in Staten Island, Elizabeth Meadens, who has a fabulous collection as well. As a matter of fact I spent $6,000 this year with her. Later I said to myself, "$6,000, well I'm insane, but that's okay." To educate myself in African American history is costly.

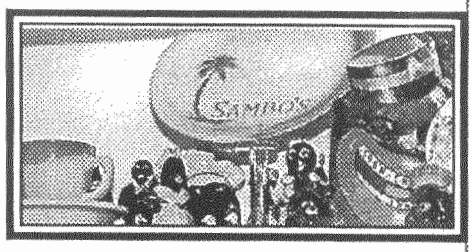
ABB: How do you determine authenticity?

Dr. Pittman: That's pretty hard. What I do is smell items. New things have a certain smell. If you can smell something, stay away from it. If it's an old book you won't know it's authentic unless you read something about it. For example, I have a volume of Uncle Tom's Cabin valued at about $20,000.

ABB: That's a first edition?

Dr. Pittman: It's a first edition, but I have others that look exactly like it. And the reason I bought them is so that when I talk to young people I can show them the difference. You can't tell them apart except there is one code on the fly sheet that makes the distinction between the first edition and anything else. On the fly sheet of the first edition it has "Hobert & Robbins." In 1852 Uncle Tom's Cabin sold 500 copies in the first week.

The second week they went back to the press for an additional 500 copies, and after that a million or more copies were eventually sold... the first two weeks are considered the first edition, anything after that is not. And only those two printings have "Hobert and Robbins." So if you get a copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin printed in 1852 that doesn't have "Hobert and Robbins," it's not a first edition, but for all intents and purposes, it looks the same.



(cont. on page 14)

FIVE POINTS -
From The Ground Up

Tobacco Pipes Part II

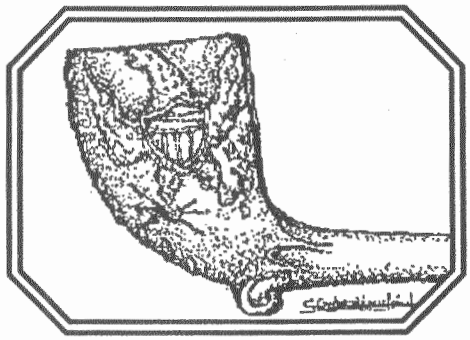
Paul Reckner

Tell me what you smoke and I
will tell you who you are.
-- Journal Pour Rire, 1851

Part Two of "Tobacco Pipes from the Five Points" looks at the archaeological material from the Courthouse Block/Five Points site in light of tobacco history and culture. Objects and symbols hold a variety of different meanings, depending on context. Understanding who, where, why, when, etc. helps historians and archaeologists approach these levels of meaning, and this article suggests some of the questions and perspectives that the Five Points tobacco pipes will allow us to explore. Our efforts will hopefully produce a more fully fleshed out image of those nineteenth century New Yorkers who were unable to leave us their own history. The drawings that appear with this article represent some of the pipes found at the Courthouse Block/Five Points site.

The Five Points pipe collection is extensive and exemplifies the wide variety of styles from which people in the nineteenth century could choose. Most are made of white clay and many are plain, unadorned. The simplest ornamentation is often the pipe maker's name or initials molded on the bowl or stem, and several of these are from local New York pipe makers or tobacconists. At the other end of the spectrum, one remarkable pipe has a bowl fashioned like a medieval jester's head. Another pipe has a molded image of an aboriginal figure carrying a spear in one hand and a tobacco plant in the other. We know from the design that this pipe was probably made in the east of England between 1815 and 1860. Several pipes in the collection are made from porcelain in a style typical of German "peasant" pipes. The complete pipe would include a wooden stem and a mouthpiece of bone or amber. A number of pipes have Irish slogans and symbols in their design: "Home Rule" appears on several pipes, and one example has a harp on the back of the bowl.

As fascinating as the pipes are when considered as objects unto themselves, it is even more interesting to look at them through the lens of the history of tobacco. The key issues we wish to address are the ways individuals used smoking culture to build ethnic, national and class identities. The quotation which heads this article implies that there were people in the nineteenth century who felt that a person could be judged based on what he or she smoked. Historical records tell us that there were people living in Five Points who could lay claim to Irish,

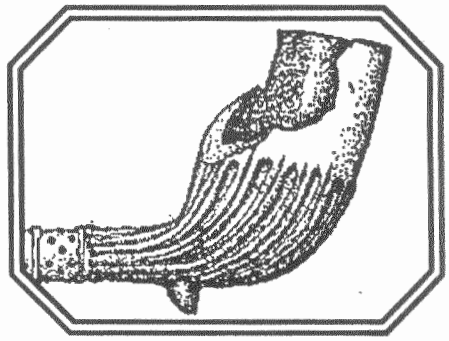


Drawings by Paul Reckner

German or African cultural heritage. We hope to explore how early immigrants and later generations claimed and communicated their heritage. The Irish have a long history of smoking, and there are pipes in the collection which indicate that the people using them (presumably Irish) had an awareness of their national and political heritage. We see pipes with Irish political slogans like "Home Rule" and "Erin Go Bragh," and designs which include traditional Irish motifs, such as the shamrock and harp. These slogans tell us that it was still important for people to be recognized as Irish in a cosmopolitan city like nineteenth century New York.

Several large porcelain pipe bowls in the collection are typical of the sort of pipe that a nineteenth century German laborer might use. Sources from the period describe German preferences for the very hot and harsh smoke which these pipes delivered. We can be sure that the underlying reasons for choosing to smoke such a pipe varied with individuals, and, as with many historical references, this sort of witness shows a biased view. The fact that these pipes were recognized in the popular consciousness as being "German" is worth further investigation. We want to better understand the way ethnicities are defined by other social groups who are looking at a culture from the outside.

In looking for evidence of a distinct African-based smoking tradition there is an immediate problem in the limited amount of historical research which has been carried out on the subject. The importance of tobacco and smoking in many African cultures is well known. From the African Burial Ground excavation we know that Africans and African Americans were smoking clay pipes. Several individuals exhumed from the burial ground have tooth-wear patterns which were probably the result of clenching a clay pipe stem between their teeth.



Unlike the research of Irish and German cultures, archaeological and historical works which focus on how Africans used pipes to define themselves as a people have only been undertaken in recent years. At Five Points we have the unique opportunity to address this question in the context of nineteenth century New York City. Along with recent research in Barbados and Ghana, Five Points will aid in this emerging field of study and help shed light on a long ignored but ancient tradition.

Beyond ethnicity, we are also hoping to explore how pipes were used to mark the boundaries between different

(cont. on page 20)

AFRICAN AMERICAN BEGINNINGS

(Part 3 of 4)

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson

The nineteenth century marked an era of unprecedented achievement and development for African descended people living in pre-Civil War New York. A parallel African society was created in order to meet the day-to-day needs and concerns of a newly free African American community. A statute was introduced in 1788 in the New York State legislature to emancipate the enslaved African population. This statute was not, however, activated until 1799. Historian Leon Higgenbotham elaborates:

> Fourteen years after the first emancipation all male children born to enslaved mothers after July 4, 1799, were to be freed at age twenty-eight, and all female children freed at age twenty-five. These children were to serve their masters as indentured servants until freed, provided the masters properly register their births (1978:143).

The passing of the statute implies that July 4, 1827, marked the emancipation of all enslaved Africans in New York. However, according to the United States federal census records, some Africans in New York were still held in bondage during the 1840s.

The two most important African American institutions to serve the needs of the nineteenth century African American community had their origins in the late eighteenth century. The first African American church, Mother Zion (African Methodist Episcopal established in 1796), and the African Free Schools were catalysts in the development of an African parallel society within the framework of an urban European American city.

The African Free Schools were started in 1787 by the members of the New York Manumission Society. The Society had been formed in 1785 in order to hasten the emancipation of Africans enslaved in New York. Members of this white abolitionist group included: John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, George Clinton, Daniel Tompkins, Peter Cooper and William Shotwell.

The African Free Schools were operated by the Manumission Society to help prepare children of African descent for the era of freedom. One of the concerns held by the white population in New York was that freed Africans would not be able to financially take care of themselves. The Manumission Society first established a boys' school on Cliff Street in 1787. A female division was opened at 161 Duane Street in 1792. In 1797 evening classes were started for adult students. The school's course offerings included: reading, penmanship, composition writing, ciphering, geography, oratory skills, and English grammar. Advanced courses for boys over the age of 12 were astronomy, carpentry, and navigation. Girls were instructed in dressmaking, embroidery, quilting and domestic housekeeping skills. All students were required to take a course in Morals and Manners. This course drew criticism from parents and others who believed that the course was meant to keep African students subservient to Europeans.

Although all of the original teachers of the African Free Schools were white men, the faculty eventually became African American. By 1830 there were a half dozen African Free Schools, all located below 14th Street. There was also a branch of the school located in Yorkville. School attendance was always a major problem for the school's administrators because all poor children in nineteenth century New York City had to work in order to help support their families.

The African Free Schools' efforts of to educate African American children were assisted by the Dorcas Society, an African American women's organization in New York City. The Society consisted of African American women who were members of St. Phillips Church, then located on Centre Street. These women met regularly to collect and sew clothing for the students of the African Free Schools in order that the children might attend school properly dressed. The Society was advised by the minister of St. Phillips Church and had an office at 245 William Street.

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In 1832 the African Free Schools was incorporated into the newly formed New York City Board of Education. The African Free Schools became the Colored Schools Numbers 1-6, under this system. The Colored Schools remained segregated until the 1870s. *(Part IV of African American Beginnings will appear in the Fall issue of Update.*

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Armchair Anthropology in Park Slope

Dorinda Welle

On the corner of Eighth Avenue and Lincoln Place in Park Slope, Brooklyn, the facades of the Montauk Club building depict scenes from typical and stereo typical colonial Native American life. Village women carry goods on their backs, and men launch canoes from tree-lined shores. European men wearing wide-brimmed hats set down their rifles to shake hands with Native leaders in feathered headdresses.

Established in 1886, The Montauk Club was one of several private clubs in New York State whose professional European-American male members shared an interest in Native American "customs and traditions." Membership to such clubs was typically closed to non-Europeans. Instead, club members invited Native American guests to occasionally speak on "Indian affairs."

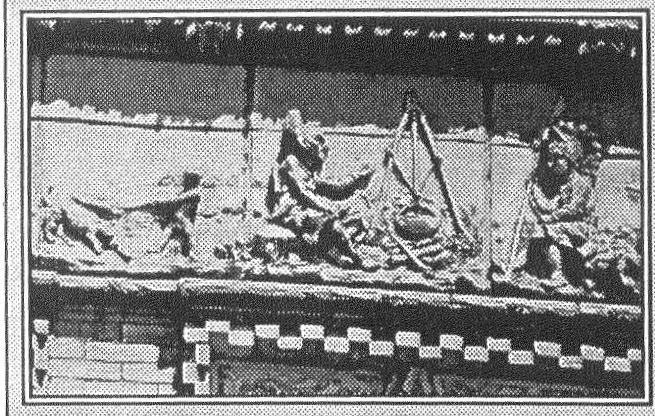

Photo Credit: Dorinda Welle

These private clubs gave a whole new meaning to "armchair anthropology." Lewis Henry Morgan and other prominent nineteenth century anthropologists used their membership in New York City and upstate clubs to secure key informants for grandiose and often inaccurate studies of Native American life. Members with an "amateur" interest in Native American culture performed their own versions of Native dances and songs in closed gatherings at the clubs, and secured objects for clubs' museum-like collections.

The contradictions of nineteenth century "salvage anthropology" are expressed even today, as the private club building sites and collections are preserved, while Native people and their sacred and everyday practices remain unprotected. The images that adorn the Montauk Club express both the beauty and politics of Native American colonial life.

the children's corner:
cynthia r. copeland

NOW HEAR THIS!: Folklore, Stories and Storytelling

When I was a kid (not much younger than I am today), I couldn't wait to take my bath after a long afternoon of outdoor play. Then I would brush my teeth, get cozy in my very comfy pajamas, nestle under the covers of my warm bed, and have one of my parents read or tell me a story. And oh, how each parent could tell a story! There was fun and comfort in that routine and I heard many different types of stories over time.

Folktales, myths, fables and stories have delighted children of all ages for centuries. Each has a way of passing on ideas and events that have been passed on orally by a people. In the narrative of folktales, myths, fables and stories, one can usually find the life and spirit of a people.

Some of the stories I heard had **characters** in them. Some of those characters were real people, even family members – you know, like crazy aunts and uncles, grandparents who were larger-than-life, and fearless cousins and friends. I also heard stories where the people were imaginary — fictional characters, created by the author or storyteller.

There were other elements to each story. For example, some stories had **morals**, or lessons to be learned from them. These story types were called fables, and they usually had members of the animal kingdom like rabbits, spiders, snakes, foxes, chickens and wolves in them. These animals appeared to take on human characteristics, dressing and acting like human beings. Thrown into human, real-life situations, the animals would figure out the best way to handle the situations they were in.

I heard stories about gods and goddesses from particular time periods, and I listened to stories about people who had super powers from places that supposedly existed at some point in time. Not knowing these places, I could only imagine what they were actually like. These types of stories, known as myths, gave me an idea of a people's **world view**. They explained the **practices, traditions** and **beliefs** of people from different cultures.

Telling **folktales** of any kind is an **oral tradition**. Through stories, the culture and heritage of a people is **preserved**. A **multicultural phenomena**, stories are universal, plentiful and have never known cultural or **linguistic** boundaries. And not surprisingly, at the core of many stories are **principle ideas.** These ideas appear to be the shared property of human beings everywhere. For example, the idea of the earth's creation and its relation to the sun, universe, God and/or the gods is popular worldwide. Stories on this topic have been written in the languages of such places as Africa, Greece, the Polynesian islands and other regions of the world.

Folktales preserved by African Americans have a unique place in American literature. When African people were forcibly brought over to the Americas to be enslaved, many aspects of the various African cultures were deliberately stripped away. Because Africans speaking different languages were thrown together on ships bound for the West Indies and the Americas, it was extremely difficult for them to communicate.

Mean-spirited laws were created by the Africans' enslavers. These laws denied Africans their basic right to learn how to read, write and become members of a growing literate society. Yet, despite this obstacle, Africans, and later African Americans created a whole new language and means of communicating. In their own words, on their own terms, Africans developed their own interpretation of the world and how it related to them. They preserved parts of their rich African heritage, culture and some traditions, through the creation of stories and the art of storytelling.

There is great importance placed on the storyteller, for without the storyteller, the story can't be told. A terrific storyteller must be imaginative, expressive and innovative. The storyteller has to work very hard to come up with clever ways of telling the meaning and interpreting the story each and every time its told. The storyteller must decide how much of the original story will be told, and how much of the story will be changed.

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A great storyteller understands the information, the **metaphors** of colorful language, and the traditions within the story and imparts or communicates those things to the audience. The storyteller must capture the attention and imagination of the audience. This can be done by the storyteller through **gestures** or body and facial movements, and through inflection and intonation, or changing the tone and pitch, the rise and fall patterns of the voice in the narration. The storyteller must fascinate the listeners.

Traditionally, storytellers were the elders within a community of people. But, like everything else, storytellers can come in all shapes, sizes and ages. And the only way to become a great ol' story-teller is to practice as a bright, young and enthusiastic storyteller. So why don't you give it a try?

Either read up on some stories that you find interesting and exciting, or make them up yourself. Learn the stories very well, then prepare to share them by acting the stories out. If you make them up, try to use fictional characters that are interesting. In your story, perhaps you can have a moral or preserve some idea, event, or happening in history. You can consider tying things from the past with contemporary things from the present. Maybe you can even teach others how to solve math or science problems.

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS!

When you have your stories down pat, set the stage. Get a costume and some props that will aid you in telling it. Each time you tell the story, add a little twist. This will help you refine your skills, talent and craft as you begin to entertain your audience.

Remember to use your imagination and creativity. The storyteller, in combination with the word and the world, can take audiences to places they've never been before and make them want to go back again.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

A Story, A Story, An African tale retold and illustrated by Gail E. Haley. Macmillan: NY 1988.

Aesop's Fables, compiled by Russell Ash and Bernard Higton. Chronicle Books: San Francisco, 1990.

Best Loved Folktales of the World, selected by Joanna Cole, illustrated by Jill Karla Schwarz. Doubleday: New York, 1982.

From Sea To Shining Sea: A Treasury of American Folklore and Folk Songs, compiled by Amy L. Cohn. Scholastic, Inc.: New York, 1993.

The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales, told by Virginia Hamilton and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1985.

Collecting Treasures
(cont. from page 9)

You have to educate yourself about the things you want to buy. If it's a rare book, you have to read about it. Suppose for example you wanted to buy Abraham Lincoln's campaign button. How can you know it's authentic? Well, you can look at the inside of it and see if it's new. Look at the metal, most old metals like tin were kind of heavy.

ABB: Where did you get that first edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin and some of the other things you purchased?

Dr. Pittman: At the University Place book store at 12th Street and Broadway. The retailer who sold it to me told me it was a first edition copy. Here's another story you might like. A guy told me about a carving. He described it as an S&M piece..that sadism and masochism stuff. I said "I'm not into that stuff but let me see what you've got." I looked at this carving of an enslaved African, all tied up in chains and he sold it to me for $3 because he thought it was an S&M thing...now this in itself is a great piece. If you saw this you'd know it was an old piece. It's a man that's gagged, there are chains all around his body. He's chained all over. So you have to know your subject.

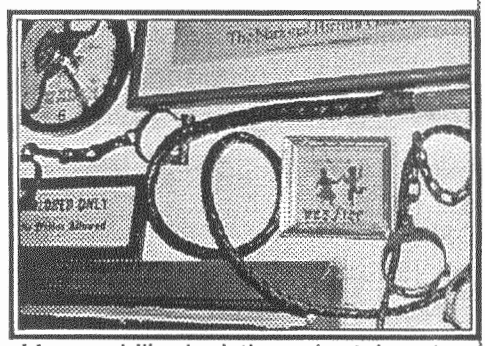
ABB: Do you ever go down south to purchase items? Are people keeping things down there?

Dr. Pittman: There are old people, 80 or 90 years old, who live in the community and word goes around when a new generation inherits old property. Local whites may approach them and say "Look you have an old basement down here, you live in New York or Chicago and you're not coming back soon. These things could be a fire hazard. I'll pay you ten dollars and I'll clean up your basement." Now in that basement there may be the first issue of Ebony, Jet or Black World. They might have Uncle Joe's old Civil War musket down there or an old military hat, or maybe some old slave things that the first generation kept. They might find one million dollars worth of stuff that they paid some African American man $10 to clear out. I see it all the time at shows and auctions.

ABB: So people have to have an awareness of what they have and its value.

Dr. Pittman: Yes, the key now is that because we are more historically oriented, it doesn't happen as much as it used to.

ABB: What did you think about the information on the African Burial Ground that I sent to you?



Memorabilia depicting a brutal past.
(cont. on page 18)

African Burial Ground Update

- An **Educators' Symposium** will be held at the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI)on Saturday, **June 10th from 10:00am to 4:00 pm.** Laboratory tours will be conducted throughout the day. Professional anthropologists, educators, genealogists, students of history and anthropology and the general public are invited to learn about the extensive educational programs offered by OPEI.

- To date, Howard University's Bioanthropological Laboratory staff has cleaned and analyzed 225 human remains out of the 390 originally taken from the site. The public is invited to view scientists at work and learn detailed analysis of the African men, women and children of early New York. **Tours of the laboratory are conducted every Friday and Saturday from 9:00 am 12:00 noon.** Up to 30 persons can be accommodated and alternative times can be arranged during the week. **Please call Mark Mack at (202) 806-5252 for further details.**

- OPEI is currently accepting applications for internships. Students interested in working during the summer months should forward resumes along with a cover letter stating academic background and future goals to OPEI.

Related Matters...

- On May 8th members of the Tenth Street First African Baptist Church Cemetery in Philadelphia, PA., held a reinterment ceremony for the remains of 89 men, women and children, unearthed during expansion of the city's subway in 1983. One of the first African burial grounds in the nation to be recovered during urban excavation, the reinterment ceremony follows five years of scientific analysis. Information regarding the history of the site is available at OPEI.

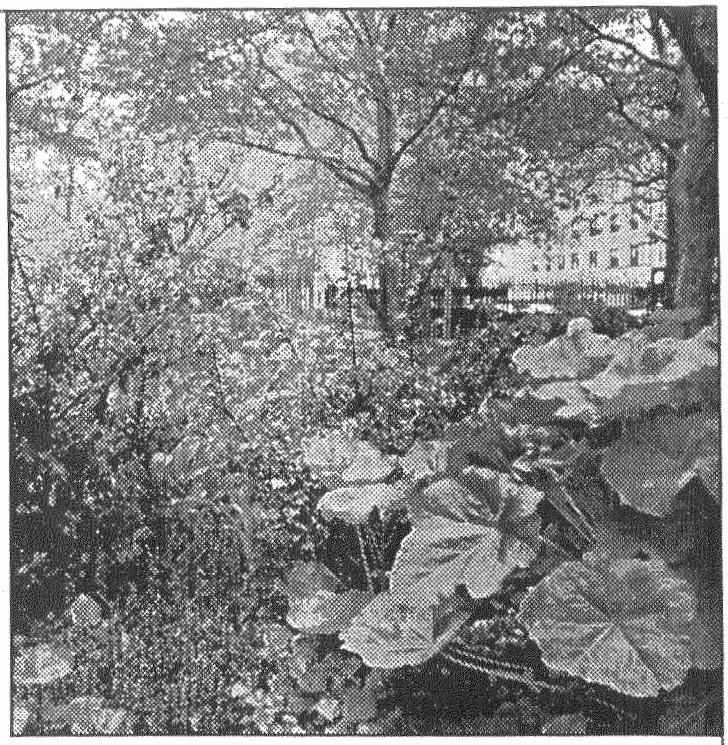


Photo Credit: Emilyn L. Brown

Mfinda Kalunga -- "The Garden at the Edge of the Other World"
Once the haven of drug dealers and prostitutes, local volunteers have created a community garden in this once abandoned area of Sara D. Roosevelt Park. The garden's name, **Mfinda Kalunga,** is in recognition of the Chrystie Street Burial Ground, a cemetery established by and for Africans after the Broadway/ Duane St. African Burial Ground was closed in 1794.

Working in conjunction with the Roosevelt Park Community Coalition and the Council on the Environment of New York City, Lisa Earl, one of the volunteer workers explains, "We are still looking to increase our membership. We are totally volunteer staffed, with no budget to speak of and are especially interested in the participation of residents of the immediate neighborhood although we also welcome volunteers who live in other areas." *(An article featuring the Chrystie Street Burial Ground will appear in the Fall issue of Update).*

Sankofa: Learning from the past to build the future

ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?
Please submit names and/or corrections to OPEI, 6 World Trade Center, U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239, New York, N.Y. 10048

African Religions in America --Part 2 of 3

Karen McCoy

In attempting to discern the level of conversion among the Africans, baptism is even more significant when considered in conjunction with the age of the Africans who were transported into New Netherlands. According to Joyce Goodfriend,

> 'of the slaves who reached New Amsterdam, 230 were male and 170 were female. Only a small number of children were imported — eight boys, five girls, and one child whose gender is unspecified. A much larger number of slaves arriving at New Amsterdam were old or at least not in optimum condition....Director Stuyvesant reported that the slaves brought in the Sparrow were on an average, pretty old, and as the Skipper alleges, rejected by the Spaniards...Five of the Negro women, who were in our opinion, unsaleable, have been kept back and remain unsold' (Quoted from Stuyvesant to the Directors, June 10, 1664, and O'Callaghan, Slavers, pp. 205-06). The most precise information on age pertains to the slaves on the Gideon. The receipt given to the captain for his superiors in Amsterdam stated that of the surviving 290 Negroes, 89 had been judged to be over thirty-six years old, and thus were "old" by the contemporary standards applied to slaves.

Since most of the enslaved Africans transported into the colony were "old," most were probably unchristianized throughout the Dutch period. This supposition is substantiated by Reverend Jonas Michaelius of the Dutch Reformed Church (Goodfriend 1984: 95-107).

Many Africans continued to practice their traditional rituals and beliefs apart from Europeans. This led Reverend Jonas Michaelius, the first Dutch minister at New Amsterdam, to complain that the Africans spoke " jeeringly and ...scoffingly of the godlike and glorious majesty of their [African] Creator" (Corwin 1901: Vol. 1, 57). Nevertheless, many African parents, who shunned Christianity for themselves, did apparently encourage the baptism and instruction of their children. They perhaps thought that at some time in the future their children would benefit. Dominie Selyns maintained that although adult Africans sometimes requested that their children be baptized, Dutch clergymen often "refused to do so, partly on account of their lack of knowledge and of faith, and partly because of the worldly and perverse aims on the part of said [adult] Negroes. They wanted nothing else than to deliver their children from bodily slavery, without striving for piety and Christian virtues." He further explains that "when it was seemly to do so, [they] have, to the best of [their] ability, taken much trouble in private and public catechizing. This has borne but little fruit among the elder people who have no faculty of comprehension; but there is some hope for the youth" (Corwin Vol. 1, 548, Vol. II, 880).

Yoruba wooden divination vessel, Nigeria
© 1971 Geoffrey Williams

The emphasis placed upon Dutch Reformed doctrines constituted another serious hindrance to the efforts to convert the mass of Africans. Unlike the Church of England, the Dutch Reformed Church required that catechetical instructions necessary for baptism encompass nothing less than careful and diligent study of Christian and Dutch Reformed doctrines. Therefore, the Church authorities recommended that "the children belonging to the Dutch Church, commit to memory, and publicly repeat in the school, one section of the Heidelberg Catechism, [in Dutch] at least once every week." This would prove almost impossible or extremely difficult to accomplish for the vast majority of Africans, who did not have a good grasp of the Dutch language. Similarly, the unemotional sermons of the Dutch Reformed ministers could not have held much attraction for many Africans. The requirement that one of the two Sunday sermons be preached from the Heidelberg Catechism, probably served to further discourage many Africans from attending services in the Dutch Reformed churches (De Jong 1971: 423-436).

In British New York, it was not until the organization of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that an institutional attempt was made to formally introduce and inculcate Christian theology and principles to the enslaved Africans. Headed by the Anglican Bishop of London, the Society published tracts and sermons, and commissioned and assigned missionaries and catechists. Under the auspices of the SPG, Elias Neau, who was captured at sea by the French and later sentenced to serve as a galley slave, began catechizing the city's "children, Indians, Negroes, and other persons" in 1704. The society formally confirmed his appointment the following April (Cohen 1971: 8-14).

Despite the Society's proclamations of the duty of Christian colonists to evangelize and christianize their enslaved Africans, the process of conversion was blocked by major obstacles, not the least of which was the antipathy and fear of the European colonists. Many New York slaveowners feared that if the enslaved Africans adopted Christianity they would have a legal claim to freedom. To counteract the prevalent objection that conversion implied emancipation, the New York Assembly passed an act in 1706, declaring that the legal status of enslaved Africans would not be altered by their baptism. The assembly action improved the SPG's position despite underlying white hostilities, and by 1707 Neau was able to report over a hundred pupils. By 1708 his catechumens were more than two hundred.

Many slaveowners, however, were still opposed to Mr. Neau's catechizing school even after the 1706 legislation.

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They felt that religious instruction would serve to make their slaves ungovernable and rebellious. Rather than openly defy an agency of the established church, these slaveowners turned their hostility on their slaves. On August 24, 1708, Neau wrote to the Society that enslaved Africans who had asked their masters' permission to be baptized were "either threatened to be sold to Virginia or....sent into the country if they came anymore to school" (Society for the Propagation of Gospel Series A Vol. IV, LXVIII). Faced with these obstacles, the SPG missionaries, catechists, and colonial clergymen propagated the Gospel as an efficacious and attractive device for slave control. They stressed the notion that Christianizing enslaved Africans would make them docile, and, therefore, much better slaves. Slaveholders, however, were not easily convinced that a "Christianized slave" necessarily meant a "docile slave," for they understood that Christianity, with its message of spiritual freedom and equality before God, was a double-edged sword which could be turned into a weapon of resistance rather than submission.

Elias Neau's work came to an end when he died in 1722. The school managed to survive his death and was later replaced in 1760 by a school operated by an organization known as the Associates of Dr. Bray. In approximately four months, Bray's school was full to capacity with thirty young African American students. Rev. Samuel Auchmuty frequently visited this school to observe the students read and recite their prayers. His Sunday lectures at Trinity Church were also attended by these students (SPG Series B Vol. II, #1). At that time, he

> Catechise[d] them & the Adults together; by which means, [he] hope[d], as they grow up, to perfect them in the great and important Doctrines of [the Anglican] Religion, and to lead them, by the bless ing of God, upon [his] poor endeavors, to happiness here after. [He adds that he] can't help being very sanguine in [his] Expectations from this little Flock, as they are early instructed in their Duty to God & man. They have already made a very considerable progress in sewing, knitting, Reading &c and will...no doubt, with proper management & care answer the truely pious designs of the worthy Associates (Ibid).

These schools from the mid-1750s became the nurseries of future independent African-American Christian congregations. Once the SPG clergymen and catechists became aware that two of the greatest barriers to their instructing native Africans was the inability of the adults to understand spoken English and their adherence to their previous religious beliefs, they began to focus on slave children, which as the letters from the SPG catechists indicate, ultimately led to an increase in the number of African

"The survival of African religious beliefs and practices was aided by the fact that the enslaved Africans of New York City lived in close proximity to one another and had opportunities to gather outside the master's house... "

conversions, baptisms and communicants (Humphreys 1730: 22; SPG Series B, Vol. IX, 62). While some enslaved native Africans rejected Christianity, the increasing numbers of second, third and even fourth generation African Americans born and raised in America accepted it and devoted themselves to following the major tenets and precepts of the religion. It was these young African Americans, attending missionary schools such as Dr. Bray's in the 1760s, who later became deeply affected by Christianity.

The sort of acculturative process underlying Africans' acceptance of Christianity in New York City (which Reverend Auchmuty briefly describes above) was definitively a slow, generational process involving complex social and psychological adaptation on the part of both Africans and Europeans. It involved the mutual borrowing and interaction between African and European cultures. It involved the withholding and rejections, at the encounter between Christianity and traditional African religions. The number of Africans in the community, the disposition of the religious milieu, and the opportunities available for the enslaved to maintain contact with other Africans and Europeans, were all factors in the survival or loss of African religious patterns.

The survival of African religious beliefs and practices was aided by the fact that the enslaved Africans of New York City lived in close proximity to one another and had opportunities to gather outside the master's house. Despite all laws and precautions, enslaved Africans came together legally and otherwise and were able to exchange and reabsorb Africanisms. During the day, their chores brought them into continual unsupervised contact with one another; they met on the streets, at the markets, in the uncleared forests, at the wells, on the docks, in ships, when they were hired-out, and when allowed to attend catechism class (Pennington 1938:392; SPG Series A, Vol. IXX:190.) These gatherings were ideal conditions for African cultural elements to be learned and thus kept alive. At night, they talked, drank, gambled, amused themselves and gained strength from one another at their secret meetings. Enslaved Africans devised several techniques to avoid detection of these clandestine meetings. One practice was to meet in secluded areas called "hush harbors." In the midst of the "hush harbors," they were able to practice the rituals and dictates of traditional African religion.

The wooded area near the Collect Pond on Manhattan Island was such an area, providing Africans with a place where they could practice their religion without interference. They kept this place as their own autonomous social space. Besides serving as their "hush harbor", the Africans utilized the land near the Collect Pond as a Burial Ground.

(cont. on page 18)

Community Voices (cont. from page 7)

European perspective. It would be great from a historical and cultural perspective as well. I do not see why the remains would not be returned to the same site.

What has occurred with the African Burial Ground is significant because there are other burial grounds in the same area which were not disturbed, although construction went on around them, i.e. St. Paul's and Trinity Church. Also, our children and the adults will benefit educationally from this experience; an experience that will last forever.

The Landmarks Preservation Commissions' policy on reinterment states that "appropriate solutions regarding treatment and disposition of human remains (as well as associated funerary objects and material remains recovered from archaeological sites) can be arrived at through a process of consultation with government agencies, affected parties, members of the descendant community and interested parties... Current practice in many professions allows for the views of the descendent community to prevail in reaching solutions to particular questions. Invariably cost, logistics and political factors may also come into play. It is likely that agreement by all parties on a proposed action will not be unanimous, but some kind of general consensus can usually be reached." For more information call NYC Landmarks at (212) 487-6800.

Guidelines are contained in the following booklets: Policy Statement Regarding Treatment of Human Remains and Grave Goods, Adopted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Sept. 27, 1988.

Treatment of Human Remains and Grave Goods, Policy Interpretation Memorandum 89-1, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Dec. 1, 1988.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. Sub-Section 3001 et. seq.)

Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties, National Register Bulletin No. 38 (n.d.).

African Religions in America (cont. from page 17)

Burial rites were central to African religious practices, because of the powerful position of the ancestors in traditional African religions. It is believed that improper or incomplete funeral rites can interfere with or delay the entrance of the deceased into the spiritual world. Before a funeral was considered complete, several customs were observed: preparation of the body for burial, the wake, and interment. According to the Society's secretary, David Humphreys, as of 1728 many of New York's Africans were still using African burial rites when burying their dead:

> [Deceased Africans] were buried by those of their own country or complexion in the Common Field, without any Christian office....some ridiculous heathen rites were performed at the grave by some of their own people. (Humphreys 1730: 6)

In 1722 the corporation of New York City attempted to curb the tendency of Africans to gather in the "hush harbors." Funerals, which they believed fostered conspiracies and "heathenish services," were required to be held during daylight hours with maximum attendance limited to twelve.

These proscriptive laws and the subsequent destruction of the African Burial Ground did not necessarily serve as an impenetrable obstacle to the further continuation of traditional religious practices and beliefs in New York City. Some scholars, such as Jon Butler, have insisted that the Africans imported to the mainland colonies experienced an African spiritual holocaust before 1760 which effectively "destroyed traditional African religious systems as systems...and left slaves remarkably bereft of traditional collective religious practice." (Butler 1990:129) However, since some African religious concepts and behavior were not completely dissimilar to certain Christian beliefs and practices, the acceptance of Christianity by some enslaved Africans, and its subsequent transmission to their descendants, did not necessarily mean the disappearance of African beliefs or patterns of worship, but to a large extent meant their continuity in a new 'unified' system of belief and ritual. This very commonality might have served to reinforce certain African elements while others disappeared under severe prohibition and attack.

Part III of African Religions in America will appear in the next issue of Update along with a detailed bibliography.

Collecting Treasures (cont. from page 14)

Dr. Pittman: I had to sit down because it blew me away! The way it was organized and what was said made me cry, sorry to say, and I don't cry easy.

ABB: It's a very spiritual occurrence don't you agree?

Dr. Pittman: I just wish that the package could go to every African American in the United States. You have institutionalized that area...everything about slavery is consecrated and it's a spiritual thing as you say. We need it for our survival.

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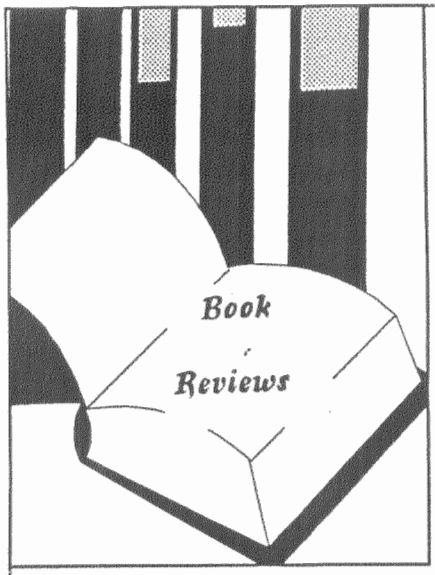

Book: Children of Promise: African-American Literature and Art for Young People
Author: Charles Sullivan, Ed.
Publisher: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Pub. 126 pp, $24.95
Reviewer: Marie-Alice Devieux

Children of Promise is an ostensibly promising addition to the cultural feast of African American literature and art. Although a slim volume for the subject, Children... offers young people a sample of some of the genre's finest artists. The works of Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Jacob Lawrence, W.E.B. DuBois, Amiri Baraka and others all serve to illuminate the complexities of America and its unrealized dream of democracy. For example, an eloquent 13 year old James Baldwin outlines and implores his readers to "listen" to a concise history of their Harlem surroundings. Walt Whitman's commentary on the state of 19th century affairs reads with a resounding relevance for our own times. Resonating too are the spirituals, sculptures, photographs, and political writings which span two centuries of struggle.

The compilation is unfortunately not without problems. Enslavement, begun by the Dutch in 1626, is errantly noted as having been "started by the British government in 1627..." Other captions are either inconsistent or just plain confusing. One photograph entitled "Girl at Gee's Bend" depicts a young Black girl wistfully looking out the window of a log cabin. A newspaper being used for the outside insulation of the cabin's window contains an ad of a smiling white model. Collapsing the context and ignoring many implications of this scene the caption reads, "Beauty and hope can survive in spite of hard times." Finally, of the 111 literary and visual artists and political figures represented, only 22 are female contributors. Zora Neale Hurston, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Charlotte Forten and countless others are curiously absent from this collection.

Given its range of material, Children of Promise can serve as a supplemental introduction to African American culture through literature and art. However, its main drawback is that it offers editorial information which is often oversimplistic or lacking in the detail necessary for educational purposes. One sixteen year old commented that although she enjoyed some of the material in Children, it shares some of the problems common to many anthologies for young people. She stated that such works provide "vague historical statements without explaining them...sometimes giving kids the wrong impression about how to interpret things." Anthologies for the young should attempt to convey even difficult concepts in accessible language, so that they can debate and discover their own conclusions.

Book: Slavery on Long Island
Author: Richard Shannon Moss
Publisher: Garland Pub., 208 pp $63
Reviewer: Tamara Kelly

Richard Shannon Moss's doctoral dissertation Slavery On Long Island: A Study in Local Institutional and Early African American Communal Life, *examines the evolution and development of slavery, the struggle for emancipation and its effect on enslaved Africans on Long Island, New York. He explores the early Dutch and English habitation of the Island during the colonial period followed by the manumission and post-emancipation status of enslaved Africans. *Moss writes that the Africans who were brought to the Island in 1626, came over as indentured servants to aid the settlers in cultivating the land. But gradually their status changed and they became the personal property of their captors and other colonists that lived on the Island.

Moss fulfills his primary objective which is to fully examine the dehumanizing institution of slavery on Long Island, since New York City has already been scrutinized by a number of historians. Unlike the South and the Caribbean, not much attention had been given to slavery on the Island because there was no "prominent slavocracy," meaning that no Long Islanders had fifty or more slaves working on their land. While many enslaved Africans in New York City were employed as domestics and in commercial occupations such as bricklaying and carpentry, Africans on Long Island worked on farms or wherever their services were wanted and needed. During Dutch rule of the colony, Africans were allowed to work for individuals when the weather did not permit them to farm the land. By doing this they were able to contribute to their own cost of living. Often they worked alongside their masters and were given the opportunity to be physically mobile.

However, when the English usurped control of the colony, Black Codes (or restrictions) were imposed upon enslaved Africans to control every aspect of their lives. The English would not allow them to move about freely because they feared some type of insurrection. Moss cites particular laws, edicts, sermons, tracts, and documents to support and illustrate his claim that many colonists believed that Africans were less than human, not worthy of freedom or independence of any kind.

The author provides the reader with a great deal of detail which enables the reader to conjure vivid images of what colonial and post-Revolutionary War life was like for enslaved Africans.

Through Moss' use of historical accounts, one can read about the psychological and physical abuse some enslaved, manumitted and independent Africans endured. Harsh treatment and a longing for freedom were factors which contributed to some slaves escaping.

The Quaker manumission movement, America's war with Britain, changes in

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the economy, and efforts made by independent and manumitted Africans to purchase the freedom of enslaved Africans, contributed to the abolition of slavery on the Island.

Even though the Quakers fought for the liberation of enslaved Africans, many of them showed resistance to it. Moreover, Moss' use of an account by an enslaved African aids the reader in seeing the irony of the colonists' interests in their own freedom and their willingness to deny the same right to the Africans they enslaved. In the account the African male hoped that America's fight with Britain for liberty would encourage them to grant freedom to their slaves. In 1799 the Gradual Emancipation Act called for the progressive emancipation of slaves on the Island and in 1841 the institution was abolished in New York.

The appendix provided contains pertinent information regarding documents and journals related to the sale, thoughts and daily activities of enslaved Africans. There are also charts that infuse significance and meaning into the statistical information the author uses. Although enslaved Africans were forced to assimilate into a new culture, Moss emphasizes the point that they retained particular ideologies and behavior which are still manifested today among members of the African American community on Long Island. Informative and impeccable, this book will become a favorable resource for scholars, students and individuals. No comparable research of the institution of slavery on Long Island has been done before.

Book: The Archaeology of Gender
Author: Diana diZerega Wall
Publisher: PlenumPress, 208 pp $37.50
Reviewer: Claudia Milne

In The Archaeology of Gender, a study of the separation of home and work in 18th and 19th century New York, Dr. Diana Wall uses archaeological data to investigate an issue that has received considerable attention among historians in the last decade. She examines how gender is restructured among the city's European elite and middle classes and the role of women in the creation of a new domestic sphere. Wall documents the social landscape after the American Revolution through archival records that include federal censuses, city directories and archaeological data in the form of eleven ceramic assemblages. These records and artifacts span three periods between the 1780s and the 1820s.

Two of the major questions that provide the framework for this study are: Were women active agents in this transformation, asserting their social power before the separation of home and workplace? Or was this something that occurred in response to the changing nature of work and continued industrial development? In answering these questions, Wall first examines the nature of the change in working and living conditions in early 19th century New York City. As women were no longer required to be "helpmates" in the family business, an elaboration of their own sphere of influence began. This is examined in part through the changing composition of both home and work places, specific to class, separating the merchant elite from the emergent middle class. Based on this information, elite separation of home and work occurs before that of the middle class and is followed by decreases in birthrates and increasing numbers of domestic help. Among the middle classes the increase in domestic help and declining birthrates precede separation.

The most original part of this accessible study is Wall's use of archaeological data to explore the ritualization of family meals as evidence for the female role in the creation of separate spheres of work and home. It is here that the argument for the female role is most convincingly made. The changing nature of dinner, moved to the end of the day, and increasingly formalized teas, cemented the woman's role in the domestic sphere. Wall's examination of the ceramic assemblages shows that as the importance of the family meal increased so did the amount of money New Yorkers were willing to spend on the family dishes. By the 1820s, before the true separation of home and work that would occur as a "watershed" moment in the 1830s, the women in these families were indeed using dinner and other family meals as secular rituals of an exclusively female sphere.

The Archaeology of Gender nicely demonstrates the relevance of archaeological data for addressing historical issues of importance. In competent hands, artifacts don't talk, but they can be made to illuminate the process of social change as it takes place in everyday life.

Tobacco Pipes -- Part II
(cont. from page 10)

socio-economic groups. Many nineteenth century writers, painters and cartoonists used the image of a short clay pipe as a signifier for members of the working class. This is another implication of the opening quotation — one which cuts across ethnic and gender-based lines.

Part of the Victorian code of civil behavior considered smoking in public to be offensive and a mark of the lower classes. Laborers often worked in the street and many smoked to make their jobs more bearable.

The short clay pipe became a common sight on the street and was often identified with immigrant minorities and members of the working class as a whole. Our sources for this era (the writers, cartoonists, etc.) are generally middle- and upper-class descendants of European heritage, and our goal is to better understand the systems and symbols used by different social groups to identify themselves in opposition to others. Looking at past behavior in this way is not a sterile pursuit because these practices are not limited to the nineteenth century or New York City. The construction of class and ethnicity is an ongoing process which is undeniably bound to the past.

Robert K. Heimann's book Tobacco & Americans (1960) is a fairly accurate and readable overview of the subject. By way of crediting the author and recommending his work, many details were drawn from this book. Also of interest is Tobacco in Colonial Virginia: The Sovereign Remedy by Herndon (1957).